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**Animal and
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WILDLIFE SERVICES—KANSAS

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Kansas

Every day, residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on Kansas Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

Kansas is a diverse ecological mix of urban and suburban settings and agricultural, forested, and grassland environments that are also home to almost 2.7 million people.

Accordingly, WS biologists work to reduce public health and safety risks and property damage associated with wildlife damage. WS works to manage wildlife populations at airports, assist agricultural producers to reduce blackbird damage at livestock feedlots, protect the public from wildlife-borne diseases, and assist the military in mitigating various wildlife problems.



Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting livestock feedlots from blackbird damage
- Protecting public safety and aircraft from wildlife hazards at airports
- Protecting industrial and military equipment and property from bird and mammal damage
- Protecting public health from wildlife-borne diseases
- Providing technical assistance and information for the protection of livestock, property, natural resources, and public health and safety

Top 5 Research Projects of Interest to Kansas:

- Reducing blackbird damage to feedlots, dairies, and grain sorghum and sunflower fields
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Evaluating blackbirds as disease reservoirs and vectors of disease
- Marking and sampling blackbird populations to identify migration patterns of Kansas blackbirds
- Developing an oral vaccine and appropriate baits for skunk rabies

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Air Travel—Every year, lives are endangered worldwide and billions of dollars are wasted when birds and other animals damage aircraft. Experts estimate that wildlife strikes with airplanes cost the U.S. civil aviation industry more than \$470 million annually. Kansas has one of the country's busiest air-transportation centers. Wichita, KS is known as the Air Capitol of the Midwest because it is home to McConnell Air Force Base, Wichita Mid-Continent Airport, Colonel James Jabara Airport, several private aircraft manufacturers (Raytheon, Boeing, Cessna, and Lear-Jet), and numerous private airports.

WS is recognized internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), conducts research from its Sandusky, OH field station to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation and reduce risks to the public. Studies are underway at several large airports where scientists evaluate habitat management practices and wildlife dispersal techniques. NWRC also maintains the National Wildlife Strike Database used by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and airports to monitor trends and wildlife species of greatest concern to the aviation industry.

Applying this scientific expertise, the Kansas WS program provides assistance to several civilian and military airports annually. WS officials conduct on-site evaluations and comprehensive wildlife hazard assessments before direct management work is done.

Protecting Livestock Feeding Operations from Blackbirds—

Blackbirds, such as red-winged blackbirds, brown-headed cowbirds, Brewer's blackbirds, common grackles, great-tailed grackles, and European starlings, cause significant economic losses to some livestock producers by consuming and contaminating livestock feed, acting as a vector for livestock diseases, and requiring management. Flocks of a million or more blackbirds feed at Kansas feedlots each day from mid-November through mid-March. The managers of these facilities have estimated that blackbirds consume and contaminate more than \$10,000 worth of livestock feed at each facility daily. During one recent winter, WS' researchers estimated that blackbirds caused more than \$660,000 in damage to three Kansas feedlots.

WS recommends and uses a wide array of techniques to mitigate the problems associated with large flocks of blackbirds. Producers are encouraged to use noise-making devices to try and scare the birds out of their facilities, schedule livestock feedings at times when fewer birds are present, and modify feed bunks and other equipment to minimize the availability of livestock feed to birds. WS also uses selective and environmentally safe methods to reduce local bird populations to levels that are tolerable. In addition, NWRC is working hard to develop more effective and efficient blackbird management methods that will alleviate damage while remaining biologically sound and publicly acceptable.

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Looking to the Future

WS' success in addressing blackbird damage at livestock feedlots, dairies, and in sunflower and grain sorghum fields throughout the State will be tied to the availability of funding and the resources necessary to address the enormity of the problem. WS' ability to address these needs in a timely and professional manner is also contingent upon cooperation from other State and Federal agencies, appropriate habitat management practices, and research.

In addition, a number of wildlife-borne diseases have become a growing concern in Kansas recently. Rabies cases in Kansas were well above average in 2002 with the disease being found in skunks, bats, and a variety of domestic animals. West Nile virus also made its appearance in Kansas. More than 100 Kansas counties have confirmed the presence of West Nile virus and at least five of those counties have reported confirmed cases in humans. In 2002, chronic wasting disease (CWD) was found for the first time in a captive herd of elk in Kansas. Testing of wild animals has escalated this year to determine if CWD is present in wild populations.

Kansas Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

